

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8967

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

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E.O. 11652:N/A DECONTROL UPON RECEIPT

TAGS: PINT, MA

SUBJECT: LOCAL ELECTIONS ANNOUNCED FOR MARCH 20

1. SUMMARY. AFTER SEVERAL WEEKS OF ANTICIPATION, PRESIDENT RATSIRAKA ANNOUNCED FEB 20 THAT ELECTIONS WOULD BE HELD MARCH 20 TO CHOOSE THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES IN MADAGASCAR'S 10,471 FOKONTANY. ONLY THE FIVE REVOLUTIONARY ORGANIZATIONS (FORMERLY POLITICAL PARTIES) WHICH ARE MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL FRONT, WILL BE ABLE TO NOMINATE CANDIDATES. END SUMMARY.

2. WITH THE PROMULGATION DECEMBER 31, 1976, IN THE JOURNAL OFFICIEL, OF THE NEW "DECENTRALIZED COLLECTIVITIES" (SEE PARA 7 BELOW), THE QUESTION IN MOST MINDS WAS THE DATE OF THE FIRST ELECTIONS. ON FEB 20 PRESIDENT RATSIRAKA ANNOUNCED THAT ELECTIONS FOR THE 10,471 FOKONTANY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES WILL BE HELD MARCH 20. HE REVEALED THAT THEY HAD ORIGINALLY BEEN SCHEDULED FOR FEB 20 BUT HAD BEEN POSTPONED DUE TO CYCLONE DAMAGE THROUGHOUT THE ISLAND.

3. ON DEC 31 IT HAD ALSO BEEN ANNOUNCED THAT ONLY THE FIVE REVOLUTIONARY ORGANIZATIONS, MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL FRONT, WOULD BE ABLE TO NOMINATE CANDIDATES. THE FIVE ARE: AREMA

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(AVANT GARDE DE LA REVOLUTION MALGACHE), FORMED IN MARCY 1976 BY PRESIDENT RATSIRAKA; KDRSM (FORMERLY AKFM), THE DEMOCRATIC COMMITTEE FOR SOCIALIST REVOLUTION, CONSIDERED TO BE PRO-SOVIET; MONIMA (MADAGASCAR FOR THE MALAGASY), THE SOUTHERN-BASED PARTY LED BY MONJA JAONA, WHICH IS SYMPATHETIC TO THE PRC; IRAY TSY MIVAKY (FORMERLY VONJY), FORMED BY DISSIDENT LEFT-WING PSD (SOCIALIST DEMOCRATIC PARTY), YOUTHS IN 1972; AND

KMTP (FORMERLY UDECMA), THE MILITANT COMMITTEE FOR THE REVOLUTION, WHICH IS CONSIDERED TO BE THE CHRISTIAN LEFT WING. OF THE FIVE, ONLY THE FIRST THREE ARE THOUGHT TO HAVE BROAD SUPPORT.

4. IN THE ELECTIONS MARCH 20, THE VOTERS WILL BE CONFRONTED BY FIVE DIFFERENT-COLORED BALLOTS, REPRESENTING THE FIVE REVOLUTIONARY ORGANIZATIONS. EACH VOTER MUST CHOOSE ONLY ONE OF THE ORGANIZATIONS' LISTS AND MAY NOT SPLIT HIS VOTE AMONG THE FIVE ORGANIZATIONS. PRESUMABLY IN FOKONTANY WHERE SOME PARTIES ARE NOT WELL ORGANIZED, THERE MAY BE ONLY ONE, TWO, OR THREE BALLOTS. THE MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (5-12 MEMBERS, DEPENDING UPON SIZE OF FOKONTANY) WILL BE CHOSEN FROM EACH ORGANIZATION IN PROPORTION TO THE NUMBER OF BALLOTS CAST FOR EACH ORGANIZATION. THIS APPARENTLY MEANS THAT ONLY THE TOP FEW NAMES ON EACH ORGANIZATION'S LIST OF CANDIDATES WILL LIKELY BECOME MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

5. WHILE THE CAMPAIGN WILL NOT OPEN UNTIL MARCH 10, THE FIVE REVOLUTIONARY ORGANIZATIONS ARE ALREADY ORGANIZING FOR THE ELECTIONS AND WOOING THE VOTERS. MONIMA HELD ITS 8TH NATIONAL CONGRESS IN TULEAR NOV 4-7 AND A LARGE PUBLIC RALLY IN TANANARIVE JAN 8. KMTP'S NATIONAL COUNCIL MET FEB 11-14 IN SABOTSY-ANJIRO (100 KILOMETERS EAST OF TANANARIVE) WHERE THEY PATHETICALLY CALLED FOR A SINGLE LIST OF FRONT CANDIDATES FOR THE FOKONTANY ELECTIONS, APPARENTLY REALIZING THAT THEY STAND LITTLE CHANCE OF ELECTING THEIR PEOPLE IN DIRECT COMPETITION WITH THE THREE LARGE ORGANIZATIONS.

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AKFM'S NATIONAL BUREAU MET IN TANANARIVE FEB 19-20. IRAY TSY MIVAKY'S NATIONAL COUNCIL MET IN ANTSIRABE FEB 25-26. AREMA HAS NOT HELD ANY LARGE MEETINGS BUT CIVIL SERVANTS ARE UNOFFICIALLY ENCOURAGED TO JOIN AREMA AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS IN THE FIELD ARE BUSY PROMOTING AREMA MEMBERSHIP IN THE FOKONTANY.

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6. ON FEB 26 THE FRONT ANNOUNCED THAT A POLITICAL BUREAU WOULD BE FORMED, & ON FEB 28 THE 18 MEMBERS OF THE BUREAU WERE ANNOUNCED. THE POLITICAL BUREAU'S PRESIDENT IS PRESIDENT RATSIRAKA, THE TWO OTHER "GOVERNMENT MEMBERS" ARE PRIME MINISTER JUSTIN RAKOTONIAINA AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE POPULAR NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. THIS LAST PLACE WILL REMAIN VACANT UNTIL THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS, EXPECTED IN JUNE. TO FILL OUT THE BUREAU, EACH OF THE FIVE REVOLUTIONARY ORGANIZATIONS HAS THREE REPRESENTATIVES ON THE BUREAU.

7. TO UNDERSTAND THE ELECTIONS FOR THE THREE HIGHER LEVELS OF THE DECENTRALIZED COLLECTIVITIES, A DESCRIPTION OF THE COLLECTIVITIES THEMSELVES IS REQUIRED. THE FOKONTANY ARE LOCAL VILLAGE AREAS WITH ORIGINS DATING BACK TWO CENTURIES: THE THREE HIGHER LEVELS WERE ONLY CREATED IN MARCH 1973 DURING THE GOVERNMENT OF GENERAL RAMANANTSOA. THE FOKONTANY WILL BE ORGANIZED IN GROUPS OF ABOUT 10 TO FORM THE NEXT LEVEL, THE 1172 FIRAIAMPOKONTANY WHICH WILL FUNCTIONALLY REPLACE THE PRESENT 698 CANTONS. THE FIRAIAMPOKONTANY IN TURN WILL BE GROUPED TO FORM 94 FIVONDRONAMPOKONTANY WHICH WILL DIRECTLY REPLACE THE 94 PRESENT SUB-PREFECTURES. FINALLY, THE FIVONDRONAMPOKONTANY WILL BE GROUPED INTO 6 FARITANY REPLACING THE 6 PROVINCES. PREFECTURES WILL NO LONGER EXIST.
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8. ELECTIONS FOR THE POPULAR COUNCILS OF THE FIRAIAMPOKONTANY, FIVONDRONAMPOKONTANY, AND FARITANY WILL BE HELD ON APRIL 17, MAY 8 AND 29, RESPECTIVELY. HOWEVER THE ORDINARY VOTER WILL VOTE ONLY TWICE, MARCH 20 FOR HIS FOKONTANY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, AND IN THE JUNE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS. ON APRIL 17 THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF EACH FOKONTANY WILL CHOOSE FROM AMONG ITS MEMBERS ITS REPRESENTATIVES ON THE POPULAR COUNCIL OF THE FIRAIAMPOKONTANY. LATER, EACH NEW FIRAIAMPOKONTANY POPULAR COUNCIL WILL CHOOSE ITS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FROM AMONG ITS MEMBERS. A SIMILAR PROCEDURE WILL BE REPEATED IN THE ELECTIONS OF MAY 8 AND 29 TO CHOOSE THE POPULAR COUNCILS

OF THE FIVONDRONAMPOKONTANY AND FARITANY. AS YET, IT IS NOT CLEAR HOW THESE APRIL AND MAY ELECTIONS WILL BE ORGANIZED.

9. COMMENT: SLOWLY, BUT STEADILY, PRESIDENT RATSIRAKA IS CONSTRUCTING A NEW POLITICAL SYSTEM FOR MADAGASCAR. SO FAR, THE FRAMEWORK OF THE SYSTEM INCLUDES HIS PARTY AREMA, THE CHARTER OF THE SOCIALIST REVOLUTION, THE CSR, THE DECENTRALIZED COLLECTIVITIES, THE NATIONAL FRONT AND NOW ITS POLITICAL BUREAU. THE SLOW, STEP-BY-STEP, CONSTRUCTION OF THIS FRAMEWORK APPEARS CAUTIOUS, AND ALMOST AD HOC IN ITS ASSEMBLY, BUT WHETHER ALL OF THESE ELEMENTS WERE THOUGHT OUT LONG AGO BY THE PRESIDENT, OR WHETHER HE IS MERELY FEELING HIS WAY ALONG, THE DIRECTION IS CLEAR. THIS DIRECTION IS SYMBOLIZED BY THE CAPTION UNDER PRESIDENT RATSIRAKA'S PHOTO IN THE MARCH 1, MADAGASCAR MATIN, "PRESIDENT DIDIER RATSIRAKA, CHIEF OF STATE, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL FRONT, AND SECRETARY GENERAL OF AREMA". PRESIDENT RATSIRAKA IS BUILDING AN ELABORATE POLITICAL ARRANGEMENT WITH HIMSELF AT THE PEAK OF THE PYRAMID, BUT WITH SEVERAL TRAPPINGS OF DEMOCRACY, TO LEND THE AURA OF LEGITIMACY & POPULAR SUPPORT TO HIS LEADERSHIP. HE HAS BEEN QUITE SUCCESSFUL IN HIS CAREFUL CAMPAIGN TO FURTHER CONSOLIDATE THE ADMINISTRATIVE SCAFFOLDING OF HIS POWER AND THERE IS NO REASON NOT TO EXPECT CONTINUED SUCCESS. BARRETT

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